

Richmond Town Forest Interim Steering Committee
August 22, 2018
Minutes

Present: Cecilia Danks, Hannah Phillips (Chair), Brad Elliott, Wright Preston, Willie Lee, Bob Heiser

The meeting came to order at 6:45.

Management Plan Progress

Hannah reviewed a schedule to keep the project on track for an October 5 final review by the Selectboard:

Action	Date	Comment
TFSC Finalizes Plan	8/22	Special meeting likely necessary on 8/29 to get to a final first draft
VLT Land Steward comments on plan	8/29-8/3 1	Check with Cara M that this timing works; they need to complete review before public comment
Public Comment Period	9/4-9/21	
Presentation to Selectboard - invite RCC/TC	9/4	15 min on agenda
Presentation to RCC	9/11	30 min on agenda (or more)
TFSC Meeting	9/12	
Presentation to TC	9/18	30 min on agenda (or more)
TFSC meeting -- review and discuss public comment	9/26	
TFSC meeting -- finalize second draft of management plan	10/10	
RCC special meeting -- approve second draft of management plan	10/23?	RCC identifies date for special meeting to approve final management plan
Presentation to Selectboard - proposed for adoption	11/5	15 min on agenda -- ideally with endorsements by the RCC and TC

Cecilia thought we might need to time for an additional draft in response to Selectboard feedback from the 11/5 meeting. Hannah will check to see if we can extend the deadline for having a completed plan.

Stewardship

Wright will brush hog the VAST trail and trim some trees and brush along the road and by the gate. Two posts need to be installed at fence locations Bruce Hennessey has flagged for crossing the grazing area.

Willie volunteered to make signs but we need to develop a list.

Cecilia offered the assistance of her class on stewardship projects, either late this month or in September. Hannah has been developing a list of tasks.

VELCO should be done with its work by early September.

Ethan and Hannah were present for a state review of the status of the wetland adjacent to the parking area. The State categorizes it as a Class III wetland, so there are no regulations that apply to parking close to it. However, the Federal government needs to get involved, via the Army Corps of Engineers. Hannah is handling this.

Educational programs

UVM's Field Naturalist Program will use the forest for its Landscape Inventory Analysis project this coming semester, through Jeff Hughes. Cecilia asked that their report list what additional information should be gathered on the forest, such as long-term monitoring data we should seek and guidance on finer scale assessments for which we might apply for grants.

The UVM tracking class will not be using the forest this year.

Cecilia suggested that she could get her class to install wildlife cameras in the forest.

Naming the Forest

The group discussed naming the forest in honor of the Andrews family. Bob Heiser said the subject has come up several times in discussions with the four sisters. Candidates include "The Richmond Town Forest at Andrews Farm," "Andrews Town Forest," and "Andrews Community Forest." The latter was the favorite of the group and Hannah suggested getting buy-in from absent members of this committee prior to advancing this recommendation.

Management Plan Text

Hannah said that SE Group plans to come back with modifications of its trail concepts, reflecting "C" as the group's favorite. One challenge will be how we map out the journey from the concepts we agree upon to the reality of having the trails more precisely sited and built, and usage managed. By stating our needs for finer scale assessments along trail routes, we will be more likely to obtain grants to fund the process. With grant deadlines coming up in December, it's important that we articulate the process as soon as we can so data collection can begin in the winter months. Arrowwood will be proposing a process for doing this, a description of which will appear in the management plan.

The team also discussed how the future Management Committee would field proposals for additional trails and new uses for the forest. In many cases the easement holders will have final say, but the committee will need to decide whether to move the requests forward per the rest of the governance structure. Suggestions were made that we create a document describing the process, and giving hypothetical examples of proposals across the full range of approval needs. Cecilia noted that we could provide guidance used in locating the initial trails approved for the property.

Wright cautioned against listing the names of adjoining landowners in the plan without their permission. He explained that all may not actively promote extensive recreation on their lands, even while welcoming forms and levels of public access they deem manageable.

We also discussed whether we should include “walking” as a form of recreation, or lump it in with “hiking.” The thought is that the word might have wider appeal than “hiking” alone, speaking to people interested in quiet strolls through the woodland, or people who view “walking” as an activity done for health reasons.

Bob Heiser questioned the part of the draft that posed a 10-year review cycle for the Management Plan, wondering how that cycle length was arrived at, and how it could be evaluated. He also noted SE Group’s inclusion of the upper parking area as readily available to users, when the committee has identified a number of problems with using such an isolated area for parking.

Other parts of the text were discussed, and Hannah will incorporate simpler editing suggestions into the text.

Kiosk

Hannah reported on prices Teagan Low has gathered for the roofing material. Asphalt shingles would be approximately \$131, a metal roof \$179 and cedar shingles \$305. Metal seemed to offer the best value.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brad Elliott